

**Public Health Committee
Public Hearing**

March 16, 2009

Testimony of Carol Salsbury, Deputy Commissioner, Department of Correction

Raised Bill No. 1120 An Act Imposing a Moratorium on the Rebidding of Purchase of Service Contracts Pertaining to the Delivery of Health and Human Services By or On Behalf of State Agencies

Good morning, Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee. I am Carol Salsbury, Deputy Commissioner of Administration of the Department of Correction. I join you this morning to speak in opposition to Raised Bill No. 1120, An Act Imposing a Moratorium on the Rebidding of Purchase of Service Contracts Pertaining to the Delivery of Health and Human Services by or on Behalf of State Agencies.

For over a year, the Department of Correction has worked on the design of a state-wide network of residential and nonresidential (day reporting, walk in) services that can provide a more efficient delivery system for offenders released into communities across the state. We have dedicated significant resources and time to this process. Passage of Raised Bill No. 1120 would negate the Department's efforts and hard work as no more than an academic exercise. More importantly, this bill would deny the Department the ability to design and implement a system of community programs that would serve transitioning offenders in a more efficient and cost effective manner. It would force the Department to continue using the existing network. A network we are proud to partner with, and which functions reasonably well, but a network that is in need of re-defining.

In 2007 the Office of Policy and Management required all executive branch agencies that issue Purchase of Service (POS) agreements for Human Services to submit a Procurement Plan. This plan was to demonstrate that agencies were complying with statutory requirements to make purchases based upon competitive bidding. This plan needed to demonstrate an open, competitive and a transparent system for the awarding of contracts.

For over 20 years the Department has expanded existing community programs (both residential and nonresidential) as new funding became available. This resulted in a patchwork approach to expansion. Program decisions were influenced too much by what was available at the time rather than by what would help build a comprehensive network of services distributed appropriately across the state. In addition, as we have expanded our needs have changed. We are proud of our progress but have recognized there are opportunities to enhance our current services even more.

Redesigning the entire community support services network is a major undertaking. This includes reviewing a number of rebidding methods, such as bidding by program

type, by geographical area, or simply by a given proportion of contracts each year. In the end, we concluded that the best way to design a system that meets the current and anticipated needs of the agency in a coordinated fashion was to rebid the entire network. This avoids the patchwork approach, and supports our effort to secure the appropriate services in the appropriate regions. It also allows us to solicit and compare proposals that respond to a consistent set of requirements.

In the nonresidential category, we do not anticipate a reduction in the number of opportunities, or slots, available for offenders in the community. In fact, we hope to gain some services and efficiencies. The intent of the Request for Proposal (RFP) is to regionalize nonresidential services in order to more easily serve those offenders on Transitional Supervision and Parole and to provide day services to regional halfway houses, thus eliminating the duplication of such services and cost at residential programs.

In the residential category, the RFP was not designed to reduce any particular type of service. There are, however, adjustments by program type in certain areas, intended to provide a better balance of services. Since my tenure began in 2003, the governor and legislature have supported our expansion of halfway house capacity from 685 beds to 1,297 beds. We hope to have achieved a balance of program requirements and efficiencies in our specifications that will maintain or even improve on our current level of services.

While our rebid decision is not driven directly by financial considerations, our requirements are intended to make our network more cost efficient. For example, we have specified an average length of stay in residential programs to be 120 days. Programs should be designed to provide complete services within that timeframe. We are also seeking one or two pilot programs for Temporary Housing, to be used for short term access by offenders discharging into the community without a predetermined place to stay; we have asked that these programs be designed for a maximum of 60 days. In both cases the length of stay is prescribed to meet program needs while making the program available to the maximum number of eligible inmates over time.

For all programs, proposals must provide evidence either that the program has met all local requirements for siting or that there is a date certain for such siting approvals. Should a proposed program be unable to secure siting approval by the date certain, CTDOC will withdraw its offer to negotiate a contract.

The process the Department started over a year ago should be allowed to continue. It is good for transitioning offenders, which supports public safety, it is more efficient for the Department and it is more cost effective for the state of Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you this morning. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.